Students host mental health first aid training

BY RACHEL FECHTER  Staff Writer

“Mental health first aid training is something anyone can benefit from because it’s everywhere,” said Laura Kim, director of University Counseling Services, and Sweet Nothings. "UCS is under represented," Larabee said. "It's important and appropriate that it would go along with [Shake the Stigma Week]. But mental health first aid goes beyond the education of origins to give people an understanding of what causes mental illness and how important mental health is so Truman students can talk openly about mental health.

Larabee said while doing research for the project, she discovered not only are people interested in taking mental health training but there is a need for mental health first aid training to seek assistance for their mental disorders. "UCS is under represented," Larabee said. "I have recently learned they have over 600 clients, and they’re only staffed enough to provide services for under 600. By a while, there is a need for people who couldn't get in for three plus weeks. To accept the fact you want to get help for your problem and when you’re told you have to wait a month or so that's hard, especially if it’s an emergency." Gilchrist said the class especially benefited college students. She said some mental illnesses and symptoms do not appear until late teens to early adulthood. This could cause confusion for students who might not understand what is happening.

“Nobody’s ever taught me anything, it’s all I know. I’m not alone. There are others out there who share my desire to conquer our anxiety or it knows it doesn’t control us.”

This quote was posted on the Shake the Stigma Facebook page as part of the Truman Speaks Out event, one of the many events that happened during Shake the Stigma Week April 11-16.

Seniors Kate Larabee, Steffanie Brouch, Lauren Kim and Jenny Lines, said they decided to teach the mental health first aid and spearheaded the week for the first time ever on Truman State’s campus.

The week started with a Treat Yo Self kick-off event on The Quad with performances by Truman a cappella groups Minor Detail and Sweet Nothings. Joe Hamilton, assistant director of University Counseling Services, spoke about combating mental health stigmas. Kim said she also feels strongly about the subject of mental health and thinks talking about it will reduce the stigma. She said the most people trained, the more mental health awareness we get.”

Brouch said she feels passionate about mental health awareness because she often has anxiety. Brouch said showing people they can talk openly about mental health is important to her. She said she also plans to pursue a career in occupational therapy and having good mental health and thinking positively has a profound impact on someone's recovery process.

Brouch said the class was beneficial for Truman students because it helped them help their peers. Brouch said 40 percent of Truman students had anxiety in the past year. “Mental health first aid is something anyone can benefit from because if you have some sort of mental health issue or crisis you’re probably not the only one.”

Boesch said that happened during Shake the Stigma Week. The purpose of the event was to help students relax and have a positive outlook. The week was part of a capstone project by a group of health science students.